

The Inadequacy of MCDP 1-0 Operations

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Introduction

"Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0 Operations codifies the Marine warfighting philosophy in operational terms."¹

*General J. L. Jones
MCDP 1-0 Operations, Foreward*

The combat experience of Global War on Terror veterans has affected changes to the "philosophy" and "terms" of Marines since MCDP 1-0 was published in 2001. The new philosophy and terms are manifestations of Marine innovation. This innovation compensates for doctrinal guidance that has become insufficient over the eight years since the current Operations was published.

Inadequacies in Operations detract from the Marine Corps' ability to fight modern wars because of a narrow perspective of warfare, illogical organization, and contradictions with joint doctrine. To regain credibility Operations must incorporate the adaptations made after the initial failures of the Global War on Terror.

Background

Marines have studied and practiced modern scaled conflict throughout the Marine Corps' history. The Small Wars Manual of

¹*Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, FOREWARD

1940² outlined many of the aspects which are incorporated in the Counterinsurgency Manual of 2006. In Vietnam, Combined Action Platoons³ proved effective in non-traditional military roles. More recently, the "Three Block War"⁴ describes the broadening of military missions from traditional destruction of enemies to humanitarian assistance. Although the Small Wars Manual, Combined Action Platoons, and the "Three Block War" are all mentioned in MCDP 1-0, they are not organized or weighted in the document sufficiently. Modern Marines have evolved to compensate because they experienced the strategic failures outlined in modern works like Fiasco⁵, and Cobra II⁶ first hand. They have overcome institutional biases reinforcing pure military-on-military action to enable employment and manipulation of all elements of national power: diplomacy, information, military, and economy. (DIME)⁷ Marines broadened the cultural implications of friendly and enemy forces to deal with populations that do not fit either classification. By necessity, Marines scoured the applicable portions of doctrine

²Small Wars Manual, FMFRP 12-15, 1990

³Francis J. West, *The Village*, (New York: Pocket Books, 2003)

⁴General Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marines Magazine*, January 1999.

⁵Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2006)

⁶Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006)

⁷*Operations*, JP 3-0, 2008, I-2

like Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW)⁸ and integrated them into a war zone. The past eight years have blurred the lines between MOOTW and traditional War. MCDP 1-0 must effectively address conflict as a continuum to facilitate effectiveness in modern war and to create strategically aware Marines.

Narrow Perspective of Warfare

Numerous concepts that have been widely accepted by historians, the Marine Corps, and enemies of the United States are left out of MCDP 1-0, Operations.

Clauswitz's "remarkable trinity" is a widely recognized model used to depict a nation's organization in three parts: population, government, and military. This model can be used to illustrate the traditional focus of Operations, as the majority of Operations is used to outline how to execute military-on-military kinetic. Conversely, the published concepts of enemies like Mao Tse Tung treat governance and populations as the basis of warfare. In Mao's concept of Guerrilla warfare the first phase is primarily political.⁹ Defeat of enemies in support of national defense must remain the primary mission of the

⁸ *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, Chapter 10

⁹ Mao Tse Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel Griffith (New York: Frederick A Praeger, 1961) 20

Department of Defense. However, the published tactics of our enemies, and experiences in the Global War on Terror have proven that defeat of a military force is only a portion of war.

The book *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*¹⁰, published by the Marine Corps in 2008, champions the human relationships between the Marines and the populations in which they fight. In its introduction, *Operational Culture* relates its contents to the population and governance portions of Clausewitz's remarkable trinity.¹¹ *Operational Culture* also relates the importance of civilian considerations in planning. Conversely, *Operations* dedicates entire chapters to offense and defense while stability and governance constitute small portions of segregated sub-chapters. To reflect the concepts prescribed in Marine Corps Publications like *Operational Culture for the Warfighter*, *Operations* must incorporate the human aspects of the noncombatant as much as the combatant.

By counting specific words in *Operations* the following table was generated to capture the narrow perspective of its content.¹²

¹⁰Barak A. Salmoni and Paula Holmes-Eber, *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Application*, (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2008)

¹¹Barak A. Salmoni and Paula Holmes-Eber, *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Application*, (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2008) 6

¹²Table generated using the search function of Adobe Acrobat Reader®.

Word	Times used in <i>Operations</i>
offensive/offense	200
defensive/defense	445
stability/stable	7
enemy	1045
friendly	128
neutral/neutrality	5

The implications of this table are twofold. First, it implies a failure to recognize stability as a portion of modern conflict. Second, it implies a polarity in the classification of people. The use of stability, or stable, seven times in MCDP 1-0 is insufficient to portray modern conflict from initiation through completion. Additionally, use of the words neutral, or neutrality, only five times in *Operations* is insufficient to accurately portray any environment that contains civilian populations. Enemy is mentioned 1045 times in MCDP 1-0, averaging over three times per page. Common implications characterize an "enemy" as a hostile irreconcilable combatant of an opposing military force.¹³ By focusing on certain words like enemy, and neglecting others, *Operations* creates a document that steers the reader to a war against a traditional combatant force, and minimizes the stability and transition phases of modern conflict.

¹³Maj Ben Connable, Operational Culture Labels PowerPoint Presentation, Expeditionary Warfare School syllabus.

MCDP 1-0 insufficiently portrays the considerations involved with stability, civilians, governance, and the continuum of conflict, and places too much stress on the stereotypical enemy. Despite acceptance of On War, On Guerrilla Warfare, and Operational Culture for the Warfighter as valid military theory, Operations neglects crucial aspects of modern conflict.

Illogical Organization

"It [Operations] reflects the notion that 'words matter',"
General J. L. Jones
FOREWARD to Operations

Operations has 323 printed pages, eleven chapters, six appendices, a bibliography, a table of contents, a foreward, and a cover page. It does not contain an introduction, or a preface. The only context provided to the reader is from a two-page foreward, and a table of contents. The chapter titles within Operations raise questions to purpose, importance, and relevance, and the chapters contain too much indefinite wording. Operations fails to provide enough context to orient the reader to the structure of the document.

The Chapters of Operations are listed below:

*Chapter 1 The Marine Corps in National Defense
Chapter 2 Marine Corps Expeditionary Operations
Chapter 3 Marine Corps Forces
Chapter 4 Employment of Marine Corps Forces at the Operational Level
Chapter 5 Logistics in Marine Corps Operations
Chapter 6 Planning and Conducting Expeditionary Operations*

Chapter 7 The MAGTF in the Offense
Chapter 8 The MAGTF in the Defense
Chapter 9 Other MAGTF Tactical Operations
Chapter 10 Military Operations Other Than War
Chapter 11 MAGTF Reconnaissance and Security Operations

Critical analysis of the terms used begs basic questions.

Examples are listed below:

1. Why is "Marine Corps in National Defense"¹⁴ first and "MAGTF Reconnaissance and Security Operations"¹⁵ last?
2. Why would "Logistics in Marine Corps Operations"¹⁶ warrant a chapter for itself, and not the other warfighting functions?
3. Why would the Marine Corps exclude stability operations, but include six other types of operations?¹⁷
4. Does exclusion from the "Other MAGTF Tactical Operations"¹⁸ chapter make "Military Operations Other Than War"¹⁹ non-tactical?

There are many assumptions that can be made concerning these questions, but the fact remains that Operations leaves it up to the 202,000 individual readers governed by this document to make 202,000 individual assumptions. In all cases listed above no

¹⁴ *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, Chapter 1

¹⁵ *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, Chapter 11

¹⁶ *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, Chapter 5

¹⁷ *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, Chapters 2,5,6,9,10, 11

¹⁸ *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, Chapter 9

¹⁹ *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, Chapter 10

definitive answer is given.

The word choice within chapters of Operations is indefinite and raises more questions than it answers. An example is Chapter 10, MOOTW. The chapter begins with six paragraphs composed of twenty-four sentences. Of those sentences, ten have indefinite words (i.e. may, often, can, usually), nine apply to war as well as to operations other than war, and only five provide distinguishable statements pertaining to MOOTW. Less than one sentence per paragraph of the first two pages of Chapter 10 provide distinguishable characteristics of MOOTW. In order "codify philosophy"²⁰ Operations should be revised to remove indefinite wording, and minimize assumption.

Neither the organization, the word choice, the implication, nor the weighting of subjects reflect the notion that "words matter."²¹ To fix this MCDP 1-0 must be organized in a more apparent manner and provide a formal introduction outlining the relationship of each chapter.

Contradictions with Joint Doctrine

The strongest argument for the revision of Operations is its relationship to other doctrine. Marine Corps Operations, MCDP

²⁰ *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, FOREWORD

²¹ *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0, 2001, FOREWORD

1-0 was published on 27 September 2001, 17 days after the publication of Joint Publication 3-0 Operations (JP 3-0). JP 3-0 was revised in September of 2006, but the Marine Corps has not revised MCDP 1-0 to reflect the joint changes. Since September of 2001 the entire Department of Defense has undergone an evolution-by-fire that continues today.²² Although the Army and Joint publications reflect this evolution the Marine Corps has yet to update the 2001 version of Operations.

Although there were many changes in the 2006 revision of JP 3-0, the following three revisions relate specifically to points previously made:

1. The term *battlespace* is replaced by *operational environment*²³
2. The term *MOOTW* is discontinued²⁴
3. *Offense, Defense, and Stability* are the three major types of operations. These three operations will happen in every type and phase of military actions in varying degrees of importance.²⁵

These three changes contradict the organization and content of MCDP 1-0. Despite the replacement of battlespace with operational environment, the word "battlespace" is used 127 times in MCDP 1-0. The change from battlespace to operational environment is more culturally aware, and does not bind the warfighter to a term associated with armed conflict. MOOTW has not existed as a joint term in over two years, yet it is still

²² Thomas H. Kean et. al, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, (Washington: United States Government, 2002) 45

²³ *Operations*, JP 3-0, 2008, iii

²⁴ *Operations*, JP 3-0, 2008, iii

²⁵ *Operations*, JP 3-0, 2008, v1-v2

in Marine Corps Doctrine and taught in Marine Corps Schools. Lastly, recognition of stability along with offense and defense as the three types of operations contradicts MCDP 1-0 in content and organization. MCDP 1-0 does not put sufficient emphasis on stability operations. MCDP 1-0 has seven chapters depicting seven types of operations. This contradicts the common language that JP 3-0 uses to relate all operations to offense, defense, and stability. The intent of MCDP 1-0 will not be served until the Marine Corps stops teaching obsolete terms through an antiquated document.

Conclusion

Critical deficiencies exist in MCDP 1-0 Operations. At some point Marines will no longer have the crucible of Iraq and Afghanistan to develop proficient warfighters. When those theaters no longer exist Marines will have to rely on doctrine for standards of operation. To remain effective as a governing document MCDP 1-0 must reflect the evolving role of Marines, must provide context, must contain definition, and must relay the common language of other services.

Word Count 1951

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